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THE BOARD OF TRADE AT WORK

To the student of colonial history few English institutions offer more of interest than the one which, in name at least, presided over the destinies of the English establishments in North America, the Board of Trade and Plantations. The full story of its activities remains to be written, but in the course of investigations to that end many details of its inner life, scarcely less important and often much more interesting than the record of its public acts, have come to light. It seems not without value to bring these together to form a picture of the Board as a living, working body. For it is particularly true of the old British administrative councils that their internal history is often hardly inferior to their external career in importance. This is peculiarly true of the Board of Trade. It is proposed in the following study to describe as well as may be, what in an individual would be called, its private life.

"They had", says Roger North in his *Examen*, writing of a Restoration Council of Trade, "a formal Board with Green Cloth and Standishes, Clerks good store, a tall Porter and Staff and fitting Attendance below and a huge Luminary at the Door. And in Winter time when the Board met, as was two or three times a Week or oftener, all the Rooms were lighted, coaches at the Door and great passing in and out as if a Council of State in good Earnest had been sitting." Though these words were applied to an earlier establishment they are full of suggestions of the later and greater Board. Beginning its career in the spring of 1696 without precedent or traditions beyond such as were derived from these earlier bodies, the new Board of Trade had neither meeting-place nor employees, material assets nor order of procedure. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century it had become a fixed and elaborate institution, with the outward look of "a Council of State in good earnest", so that North's half-humorous description no doubt well fitted the later board to which he was accustomed. To trace some of the steps by which its complex organization was evolved, and to give a glimpse of its inner life, its character and membership, is the purpose of this paper.

One of the first requisites for a new establishment like this was a meeting-place. In the royal commission issued in May, 1696, the persons therein named were directed to "meet together at some con-

venient place in our palace of Whitehall which we shall assign for that purpose or at any other place that we shall appoint for the execution of this our commission".¹ Though the place was thus named by the king, the details were left to be arranged by the commissioners themselves. For the first few meetings they occupied a room at Whitehall, adjoining the apartments which, late in July, were assigned for their permanent use.² The Board in a body officially inspected the rooms,³ and spent considerable time discussing them, corresponding with the Treasury, the Lord Keeper, and even the king,⁴ and interviewing Sir Christopher Wren who was then surveyor of the royal works.⁵ As a result the office was fitted up in the course of the summer. It was occupied, however, only about a year and a half. On January 4, 1698, occurred the Whitehall fire, in which the Plantation Office, along with others, was destroyed.⁶ By prompt action on the part of the secretary and clerks, the papers were probably all saved with the exception of a bundle relating to Africa.⁷ The secretary, William Popple, took the books and papers to his home in Essex Street and there the meetings were held for about two months.⁸ During this time, as before, the Board negotiated with Sir Christopher Wren⁹ about the fitting up of the office.¹⁰ In March permanent quarters were provided in that part of old Whitehall which had been commonly known as the Cockpit, and which about this time was remodelled for the Privy Council Office.¹¹ By 1718 the Board had outgrown this location and was asking for repairs and the building of a new room,¹² but no change was made

¹ Board of Trade Journal (B. T. J.), vol. IX., p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8, 9.

⁶ B. T. J., X. 391.

⁷ B. T. Calendars, 66, contains an inventory of books and papers of the Plantation Office. Against one of them is the memorandum, "This bundle of African papers was lost in the fire at Whitehall Jan. 4, 1697/8".

⁸ B. T. J., X. 391-446.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 397-398.

¹⁰ Even minor details were discussed at the Board. In one case the secretary was instructed to write for "locks, grates and tongs" for the rooms of the Board of Trade. B. T. J., X. 415.

¹¹ John Timbs, *Walks and Talks about London*. The word Cockpit was used only a few weeks. After May 30, 1698, the Board's papers were all dated at Whitehall, but there was no change at this time.

¹² B. T. J., XXVII. 65. In July, 1720, this demand was increased to two rooms, and from this time till 1736 requests for repairs were frequent. The complicated interrelation among parts of the British government may be illustrated by the fact that these requests were addressed at different times to the Lord Chamberlain, the Lords Justices, the Lords of the Treasury, and the Board of Works. The decision seems to have been that the Treasury was the proper authority. *Ibid.*, p. 181; XXX. 270, 283, 288; XXXI. 328, etc.

till 1723. In that year the Commissioners of Trade were asked to vacate their office in favor of the Bishop of London¹³ and were assigned to other apartments in Whitehall. Here they worked without interruption for nearly twenty years. In 1742 the building which they occupied was sold to the "Commissioners for Erecting a Bridge at Westminster", who demanded a rental of £120 annually and refused to lease the place for longer than a year and a quarter in advance.¹⁴ The Board paid rent till the summer of 1746, when a new office was fitted up in the Cockpit over the Treasury.¹⁵ Here—and it was probably true of earlier buildings as well—the clerks and under officers "resided in the attick story" above the rooms of the Board of Trade.¹⁶ No doubt this was in order to have them ever at hand, for their office hours were many and long. By 1774 the Board's lengthy reports and accumulated material had again outgrown the available space. On November 5, a petition was sent to the Treasury asking "either that the other state papers now kept in the rooms adjoining to these apartments on the South may be removed or that some other place within His Majesty's Palace of Whitehall may be appointed for carrying on the business of this department".¹⁷ As this is the last trace in the Journal of the housing of the Board, the situation, most likely, was not relieved till the dissolution in 1782.

In spite of these repeated changes, the general arrangement of the Plantation Office must have been similar throughout. With the exception probably of the first temporary location, it always consisted of four rooms or groups of rooms. The Council Chamber, where formal meetings of the Board were held, must have been of considerable size, as it was usual to give audience to a number of people at one time.¹⁸ Here the commissioners seem to have sat around a table, each having his own place according to a definite order of precedence.¹⁹ Communicating with this room from one side was that of the secretary, and from another side the waiting-room or rooms²⁰—for there were at times several of them—

¹³ B. T. J., XXXIII. 194.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. LI. pt. I., p. 75.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, LIV., 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, LXVI. 197.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, LXXXII. 69.

¹⁸ E. g., March 26, 1737, when a "great number of Quakers" attended the Board. B. T. J., XLVII. 98.

¹⁹ The names of the Lords of Trade always appear in a fixed order. When a name was omitted from the Commission, all below it were advanced and the name of the new member placed at the end of the list, except that a peer's name took precedence of others.

²⁰ B. T. J., XXXVIII. 235.

where witnesses, petitioners, and visitors of all sorts had to wait till formally admitted to the Board. Besides these²¹ there was the clerks' room, which was most carefully guarded from outside intrusion. It was furnished with a separate desk for each clerk²² and facilities for the constant drafting, copying, and assorting of documents.

It will be seen, then, that the Colonial Office was an establishment of considerable size and orderly arrangement. The Board of Trade which occupied this office was likewise well organized. It consisted at the outset of eight active and eight honorary members. The honorary or ex-officio members, the Chancellor, President of the Council, Keeper of the Privy Seal, Lord Treasurer, Lord High Admiral, two Secretaries of State, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, were required to attend the Board only on special occasions.²³ On the active members, two²⁴ lords and six commoners, devolved therefore the responsibility of office. The member first named in the commission—and this was always a peer—was the president. Three members were to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, while all letters and representations must be signed by five. This last requirement was lowered to four in 1697.²⁵ From 1707 to 1712 only seven active members were named, and from 1712 to 1717 the Chancellor of the Exchequer was omitted from the honorary list. Otherwise the constitution of the Board was unchanged until 1768, when the newly established Secretary of State for the Colonies became ex-officio president, and only seven members were appointed by name. From 1779 to the dissolution in 1782 there was a separate president, thus making up the usual number of active members apart from the Secretary of State.

The Board seems to have had full authority over the time and frequency of its own meetings;²⁶ and if the number of them is any

²¹ It is clear that there must have been also, especially in the Board's later years, a room or group of rooms used for storing the immense mass of books and papers that had accumulated. Curiously enough, the Journal makes no mention of such rooms.

²² B. T. J., LVI. 100.

²³ "And we do hereby further declare our royal will and pleasure to be that we do not hereby intend that our Chancellor [etc.] . . . shall be obliged to give constant attendance at the meetings of our said Commissioners, but only so often and when the presence of them or any of them shall be necessary and requisite and as their other public service will permit." From the Commission, B. T. J., IX. 1. It is printed in *N. Y. Col. Doc.*, IV. 145.

²⁴ After 1714 and during short intervals before that time, only one lord was appointed to the Board, the other members being commoners.

²⁵ B. T. J., X. 233.

²⁶ *E. g.*, on June 25, 1696, the Board decided to meet every Monday at 4 p. m. and every Wednesday and Friday at 10 a. m. (B. T. J., IX. 7) and on June 23, 1702, it decided to meet Mondays and Wednesdays at 4, and Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at 10 (*Ibid.*, XV. 97).

indication, it must have been, during the first few years of its history, a very efficient public servant. In the first ten years it was not uncommon to meet eighteen, twenty, or even twenty-four times a month, and the average per month for a whole year was sometimes as high as eighteen or nineteen. By the middle of the century this average had been lowered to the neighborhood of ten, the Board's zeal having somewhat abated. After 1768 there was a more marked falling off, due possibly to the decrease of the Board's authority and its dependence on the Secretary of State for the Colonies.²⁷ Not only were the meetings less frequent in the winter, but it came to be customary to indulge in a vacation in the summer or autumn. As early as the '30's it was common to adjourn²⁸ for a month, and as time went on this was increased to two months and even three during which no effort was made to hold any meetings whatever. Perhaps this may throw some light on Edward Gibbon's admission that "our duty was not intolerably severe and that I enjoyed many days and weeks of repose without being called away from my library to the office".²⁹

In attendance as well as the number of meetings the Board made a good beginning. At first the average attendance ranged from four to six with a "full Board" on special occasions. In this as in other particulars enthusiasm waned toward the middle of the century, though it was somewhat renewed again at the end of the period. As early as 1708 there was some difficulty in getting enough members together to transact business,³⁰ and in 1709 the Earl of Sunderland ordered that enough members to form a quorum should be always in town.³¹ When this was not the case a special summons was sometimes sent to the absentees who happened to be at the

²⁷ In 1774 the Board met, on an average, about twice a month, the lowest figure that it ever reached. Even this compares favorably with the Committee of Council for Trade and Plantations from 1675 to 1696, which met seven times a month during only one year, five times a month during one year, and the rest of the time from four times to a little more than once a month. Dr. Andrews says (*British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of Trade and Plantations, 1622-1675*, p. 78) that the Council of Trade held forty meetings in the year 1661. The Board held 35 meetings in 1774, 100 in 1767, 135 in 1749, 162 in 1730, 189 in 1715, and 230 in 1697.

²⁸ Adjournment might be for the "usual recess" in the summer or for other reasons. On March 7, 1768, the Board adjourned till April 12, "on account of the approaching general election". B. T. J., LXXVI. 58. As most members of the Board were members of Parliament, they probably needed this time to look after their interests in the country.

²⁹ *Memoirs of Edward Gibbon* (ed. Henry Morley), p. 176. Gibbon was a member of the Board from July 14, 1779, to the disestablishment in 1782.

³⁰ B. T. J., XX. 35; XXI. 225.

³¹ *Ibid.*, XXI. 234.

least distance from London.³² A few times in 1733 Martin Bladen was left to uphold, alone, the dignity of the office.³³ So far as appears in the Journal the "Secretary acquainted the Board"³⁴ as usual of the business to be transacted and all the routine was gone through as though a quorum had been present.

The fact that anything at all could be done with only one member present is due, no doubt, to the constant attendance of the employees. Through them the Plantation Office was a permanent and continuous establishment which was always at work even when the Board itself did not meet. It is necessary, therefore, to glance at the office force and see just how it was constituted. The secretary was the most important official next to the commissioners themselves. At the first meeting that the Board ever held, June 25, 1696, it was decided to have a secretary and William Popple was appointed to that office.³⁵ Although this appointment was made by the Board, all following secretaries were named by the crown, while the Board continued to choose the other officials. In the first few weeks, employment was given to three clerks, two messengers, two doorkeepers, and a "necessary woman" or janitress, while two stationers were engaged to furnish paper under the Board's patronage.³⁶ In 1701 another clerk was added.³⁷ By 1708 the office staff consisted of a secretary at £500, a deputy secretary or chief clerk at £100, and seven clerks, two messengers, a doorkeeper, and a janitress, at from £80 to £30, the total amounting to £1150 a year.³⁸ After removing to the new office in 1724 the Board felt the need of a porter to attend at the door. The request was granted by the Treasury and the new officer installed at £40 per annum.³⁹ In 1730 the Board asked for and obtained still another official known as the solicitor and clerk of reports, at £200.⁴⁰ For over thirty years this position

³² B. T. J., XL. 176.

³³ *Ibid.*, XLIII. 112, 114, 127, 128.

³⁴ After reading the Journal's frequent repetitions of this formula one is tempted to reverse the familiar story told of Bladen that when he applied himself to the business of the office, his friends in derision called him "Trade" and his colleagues "the Board". See *Dictionary of National Biography*, art. Martin Bladen.

³⁵ B. T. J., IX. 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XIV. 194.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, XX. 22.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XXXIV. 115, 190. In 1733 the secretary reported that disorderly persons were in the habit of causing disturbance in front of the office at night. The Board therefore petitioned the Secretary at War for a sentinel to station at the door. B. T. J., XLIII. 13. I failed to find any evidence in the Journal that this officer was appointed.

⁴⁰ B. T. J., XL. 204; also, *Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers*, 1729-1730, p. 437.

stood next in rank to the secretaryship and served as a stepping-stone to that post. In 1764 the deputy secretary was promoted to second place at £300, while the solicitor at £150 stood between him and the clerks. At the same time the number of clerks was raised from seven to nine, and all the salaries increased.⁴¹

There were, then, at the end of the period, at least fifteen persons—some of them with considerable salaries—directly under the Board's control. Besides these there was a law-officer who must be counted a part of the establishment, though his position was on a higher plane than that of the other officials, and his attendance was only occasional. The reason for such an office was this: all colonial laws had to be examined by the Board of Trade and submitted by it to the king with a recommendation for their confirmation or repeal. Also many colonial questions were considered on which a technical legal knowledge was necessary. To obtain a legal opinion, it was at first customary to consult the attorney-general and the solicitor-general, sometimes separately and sometimes jointly. In order to make their work more systematic, they were, in November, 1698, asked to divide the field between them.⁴² By 1718 the amount of business had outgrown the available time of either. It was, therefore, decided to appoint one of His Majesty's counsel-at-law to respond to all legal questions of the Board except those of the greatest importance, which were still to be referred to the attorney or solicitor.⁴³ This office was held by four persons: Richard West,⁴⁴ who was a playwright as well as a lawyer, held it from 1718 to 1725; Francis Fane, himself a member of the Board at a later time, from 1725 to 1746; Matthew Lamb, at one time a member of Parliament for Peterborough, from 1746 to 1770; and Richard Jackson,⁴⁵ whose remarkable knowledge won for him the title "Omniscient Jackson", from 1770 to the end of the Board's career in 1782.

The employees of the office, especially the clerks, were subject to rules⁴⁶ devised by the Board itself and varied from time to time. The hour at which they were to report for duty was sometimes eight o'clock, sometimes later, but there was always provision for an

⁴¹ B. T. J., LXXII. 348. The ninth clerk seems never to have been appointed, though the eight served for some time.

⁴² B. T. J., XI. 278.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, XXVII. 133, 203.

⁴⁴ West is said to have attended the Board twice a week and received three guineas for every attendance. *Cal. Treas. Papers, 1720-1728*, pp. 114, 313. He resigned this office in 1725 to become Lord Chancellor of Ireland. See article Richard West in *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

⁴⁵ For details of Jackson's life, see *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

⁴⁶ Such rules may be found in B. T. J., XXIV. 341; XXXVII. 183; XXXVIII. 235; XLI. 124; XLV. 66, 260; L. 30; LVI. 100; LXXII. 541; etc.

afternoon and, if necessary, an evening session, subject to the call of the secretary. In any case clerks were expected to be at work regularly without reference to meetings of the Board, in order to prepare business for such meetings. No clerk could leave the building without permission of the secretary, and before leaving it each one must turn over to that officer all books and papers in his desk to be locked up for safe keeping. The strictest vigilance was maintained to prevent documents from falling into the hands of persons for whom they were not intended. To this end, papers were not allowed to leave the building without permission of the Board, and the clerks while on duty were forbidden to communicate with anyone from outside, except through the agency of the secretary. Two rules were made to prevent the corrupting of clerks—that they should not act as agents for the plantations,⁴⁷ and that “no clerk should presume to demand money of any person for business done in this office”.⁴⁸ This latter seems not to refer to extraordinary attendance at the Board or the copying of papers for private persons, for which fees could legitimately be taken. The Privy Council issued an order August 12, 1731,⁴⁹ settling a schedule for such fees, and this was hung up in the office and referred to during the remaining fifty-one years of the Board’s history.⁵⁰ The penalty for violation of rules was dismissal from employment, and it was one not infrequently resorted to. It might be inflicted directly by the Board, or by the secretary, who had authority to suspend clerks for neglect of duty and submit his action afterwards to be sustained or reversed by the Board. The two most interesting cases of dismissal are those of Bryan Wheelock and John Lewis. Wheelock was expelled July 13, 1714, for charging Arthur Moore, a member of the Board, with improper correspondence with the court of Spain.⁵¹ He was, however, soon reinstated and promoted to the office of head clerk,⁵² which he held till his death in 1735. Lewis was accused in July, 1769, of having written treasonable letters to persons in America advising continued opposition. Testimony was taken of the other clerks and, being convicted of the charge, he was dismissed.⁵³

⁴⁷ On May 1, 1724, Anthony Sanderson, a clerk, asked permission to act as agent of Massachusetts, till the dispute with the governor be settled. It was refused as inconsistent with the above rule. B. T. J., XXXIV. 107, 110. This incident is referred to in a letter dated May 24, 1724, from John Colman in London to his brother in Boston, giving an account of a hearing before the Privy Council on a complaint brought by Governor Shute against the House of Representatives of Massachusetts. Printed in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, first series, V 32-35.

⁴⁸ B. T. J., XXIV. 341; XL. 202.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XLI. 230.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, LXXXVIII. 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 263.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 341.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, LXXVII. 120, 132.

When, for any reason, a clerk left the service, all below him were promoted and the new appointee placed at the foot of the list. It was not uncommon for a clerk who had grown to old age or infirmity in the service of the Board to be retired on the whole or a part of his salary. This was done as early as 1714.⁵⁴ In 1764 the plan was adopted on a large scale.⁵⁵ Lord Hillsborough represented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the need of more clerks and of higher salaries. As a result the Treasury made an additional grant of £1715 per annum to be used as the Board should see fit. The Board thereupon created two new clerkships,⁵⁶ raised all salaries, and allowed the deputy secretary and four clerks to retire on a pension for life.⁵⁷ As pensions reverted they were to be applied to still greater increase in salaries.

The appointment of officers, as time went on, was reduced to a definite system of patronage. The president gradually acquired the right to fill the first vacancy after he came into office, while the other commissioners took turns in naming a candidate, and their nominations were always accepted. This method was in use until 1764. On July 4 of that year, the same day on which the pensioning system was arranged as already noted, the Board adopted a "civil-service reform" of its own making.⁵⁸ By this each candidate for a clerkship was to present a specimen of his writing and write another specimen "in the outer room". The members of the Board still took turns in suggesting names, but each must be examined as to the qualifications of his candidate, and must withdraw during the discussion that followed. If the election failed he was not to lose his turn to nominate. In practice the applicants seem also to have undergone some sort of examination,⁵⁹ and several clerks served a week or more on probation without salary before being admitted to

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 341.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, LXXII. 348.

⁵⁶ We have already seen that only one of these positions was ever filled. See above, note 41.

⁵⁷ It must be owned that many people seem to have looked upon employment in the Board's office as a means of livelihood, rather than a post of duty. The commissioners did not easily desert their servants. In July, 1781, the secretary, Richard Cumberland, came back from a mission to Spain and Gray Elliot, who had acted in his absence, was thus thrown out of office. On July 13 the Board recommended him to Lord North for employment. B. T. J., LXXXIX. 270. On the 18th an answer was received that North had no vacancy for Elliot but would "certainly make no difficulty" in allowing £250 in contingencies of the Board till he could be provided for and would "consider himself as obliged to the Board" if they could save this amount from their expenses. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵⁸ B. T. J., LXXII. 348.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

regular employment.⁶⁰ By 1779 these details had been dropped and the old method of appointment resorted to.⁶¹

A study of the names and relationships of the Board's employees might produce some curious results. Some families stood in high favor with the colonial department, and acquired a remarkable ability for getting their names on the waiting list.⁶² The Popples are the best illustration of this. The Board of Trade's first secretary, William Popple, who by the way was a nephew and protégé of the poet Andrew Marvell and had himself a slight place in literature through his translations,⁶³ left his office in turn to his son William⁶⁴ and his grandson Alured,⁶⁵ the family holding it continuously for forty-one years. But that is not all; in 1737, the year in which Alured Popple of the third generation resigned the secretaryship to become governor of Bermuda,⁶⁶ William Popple the third, another member of the family and a dramatist of some note, entered the Board's employ as solicitor and clerk of reports.⁶⁷ This post he held till 1745 when he went to Bermuda to succeed Alured as governor.⁶⁸ Not only this but Alured himself served an apprenticeship as a clerk for five years before being made secretary⁶⁹ and his brother Henry was a clerk for a few months in 1727.⁷⁰ The Popple family, therefore, spent sixty-three years in one capacity or another in the service of the Board of Trade.

The only family that can at all rival the Popples is that of the Pownalls. John Pownall entered the Board's service as a clerk June 24, 1741.⁷¹ He became solicitor and clerk of reports in 1745,⁷² joint secretary in 1753,⁷³ and secretary in 1758,⁷⁴ holding this office

⁶⁰ B. T. J., pp. 457, 467; LXXIII. 130.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, LXXXVII. 210.

⁶² *Ibid.*, XXX. 336; XXXII. 64.

⁶³ *Dict. of Nat. Biog.* His most famous translation was that of Locke's *Letter on Toleration*. He was associated with Locke at the Board of Trade.

⁶⁴ B. T. J., XIX. 165.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXII. 100.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, XLVII. 186.

⁶⁷ B. T. J., XLVII. 106. According to an article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, William Popple III., who was clerk of reports, was the only son of William Popple II., the Board's second secretary, and was a "relative" of Alured. It is very clear from the *Journal* that Alured and Henry were brothers and were sons of the second William. B. T. J., XXXII. 64, 100; XLIII. 161; XLIV. 174. Who the third William was I do not know, though I had supposed him to be Alured's son. He is spoken of in Pope's *Dunciad*—"Lo P-p-le's brow tremendous to the town". *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

⁶⁸ B. T. J., LIII. 63.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, XXVI. 223.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, XXXVII. 83.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, L. 67.

⁷² *Ibid.*, LIII. 63.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, LXI. 153.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, LXVI. 238.

till 1776⁷⁵ and thus completing thirty-five years of uninterrupted service. Though he did not bequeath his office to his descendants as Popple had done, two of his family, George⁷⁶ and John Lillington Pownall,⁷⁷ held clerkships. Besides these two conspicuous families there are a number of other persons on the office staff, whose similarity of names makes one stop and wonder how these people were related and how they came by their posts.⁷⁸ A few of the Board's employees seem to have been old and infirm at the time of appointment, and at least three were retired on a salary after from four to six years' service.⁷⁹ On the other hand, many spent years and even a lifetime in the Board's employ. A dozen men served twenty-five years or more—some of them much more—and one of them, Samuel Gellebrand, first as clerk and later as deputy secretary, gave fifty years of his life to the Board of Trade.⁸⁰

Employment in the Colonial Office must have served as a good training for other posts in the government service—unless indeed it was simply a stepping-stone to further patronage. Whatever the explanation, several of the Board's servants were chosen for work in allied fields. We have already seen that Alured and William Popple were called away from the Board's service, in 1737 and 1745 respectively, to become governors of Bermuda. In 1711 Bryan Wheelock, then only a clerk, accompanied Sir John Copley on a mission to Italy,⁸¹ and in 1717 another clerk, William Hoskins, was chosen by John Chetwynd, himself a member of the Board, to attend him on a similar mission to Spain.⁸² In 1761 John Pownall the secretary left his work to go to Ireland with Lord Halifax⁸³ who was then Lord Lieutenant. In 1765 Silvester, the clerk of reports, gave up his position because he had been appointed agent "to the intended new government in Africa".⁸⁴ Again on May 7, 1776, Ambrose Serle, the clerk of reports, was given leave of absence without pay to become under-secretary to the "Commission which Lord Howe

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, LXXXIV. 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, LXXX. 192; LXXXIII. 47.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, LXXVIII. 15; LXXX. 192.

⁷⁸ There were three Serles, two Hills, two Wrights, two Griffins, two Sedgwicks, and two Grays.

⁷⁹ Maurice Carrol, 1708–1714, and Daniel Cuchow and Robert Green, 1760–1764, all clerks.

⁸⁰ B. T. J., XX. 22; LXVI. 149.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, XXIII. 79.

⁸² *Ibid.*, XXVI. 276. Chetwynd was envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Madrid. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁸³ B. T. J., LXIX. 300.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, LXXII. 154. This was Senegambia. A plan to establish a government there was discussed at intervals in the first half of 1765, and by August the agents of the government were negotiating with the Board.

took to America".⁸⁵ Also Richard Cumberland, the Board's last secretary, was sent secretly in 1781 to help negotiate a Spanish treaty.⁸⁶

These specific instances serve to illustrate the close relation between the Board of Trade and Plantations on the one hand, and the great world of colonies and trade on the other. Indeed unless their position was purely a sinecure as some have maintained, the men in this office must have had an excellent opportunity to become familiar with colonial questions. This was especially true of the secretary who figures as a very considerable personage.⁸⁷ He seems never to have had a vacation. He and at least some of his clerks were always at their posts to receive communications and prepare business for the meetings of the Board. He opened the Board's letters;⁸⁸ he transacted routine business, such as transmitting accounts to the Treasury, without waiting for orders;⁸⁹ he interviewed petitioners and visitors of all sorts, afterwards reporting their visits; he received innumerable communications in his own name and answered many of them, submitting his answer, however, for the Board's approval; he had the custody of all papers and the supervision of all clerks. If Mr. Penn postponed his attendance on the discussion of the Pennsylvania boundary, it was the secretary that received and reported the message. If the Board wished to interview certain men, it was the secretary who found out in some way that they were or were not in town. If the Lords of the Treasury or the Commissioners of Customs sent a message, it was usually delivered in the morning before the Commissioners of Trade had arrived, but the secretary was always there to receive it. He abstracted lengthy

⁸⁵ B. T. J., LXXXIV. 78. Serle is classified as a "Calvinist writer". He was the author of the *Christian Remembrancer*, *Christian Husbandry*, *The Church of God*, and other works. From 1776 to 1778 he accompanied the British army to America and during part of that time had control of the press in New York. *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

⁸⁶ B. T. J., LXXXIX. 260. Cumberland was a dramatist, beginning his literary career at an early age. According to the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he owed his preferment to the favor of Lord Halifax. According to that article, the latter made him "*his private Secretary in the Board of Trade*" and as the office was "nearly a sinecure" he "amused himself by studying history and composing an epic poem". The Journal contains no record of his being a clerk in the office before his appointment as clerk of reports in 1765, and Halifax had not been a member of the Board since 1761.

⁸⁷ His influence with the Board may be shown by an illustration. On December 17, 1746, the Board adjourned till January 11 following. On December 23, the secretary called a meeting to receive a petition from the Bristol merchants against the edict of the French king. B. T. J., XLVI. 189.

⁸⁸ B. T. J., IX. 309.

⁸⁹ The president of the Board also, at times, transacted business alone during a recess. For an illustration of this see Westmoreland's action, February 20, 1728. B. T. J., XXXVIII. 43.

documents for the Board's convenience; procured books and papers for its use; summoned men to appear at its session; investigated various commercial projects; kept himself informed about the sailing of ships and other matters of interest. In fact everything that was done or said was passed in some way through the hands of this ever present secretary. Every detail from the misdemeanor of a clerk or the need of having a wall of the office whitewashed, to important matters of policy, was brought to the notice of the Board by this same official. It is a temptation to feel that the secretary of the Board of Trade must have been a really learned man on the subject of the colonies, or else the most mechanical worker in the kingdom.

It has been seen that the Board's establishment became constantly larger, and it naturally follows that it became also more expensive. The salaries of employees amounted to something like £800 in the earlier years and by the end of the period had reached £2000. But this was only one source of expense. The Commissioners themselves were drawing a salary of £1000 each.⁹⁰ Besides this there was the cost of housing, light, heat, materials, and postage. For the whole they were dependent on the Treasury. Curiously enough, no systematic arrangement was made at first to furnish the Board with funds. George Stepney reported, December 31, 1697, that he had paid for the new commission in which his name was inserted, to the amount of £70, out of his own pocket, and asked to be reimbursed from the Treasury.⁹¹ In the following April some of the employees were believed to be in actual want, their salaries being one year in arrears.⁹² In February a novel arrangement was resorted to. The secretary received from the Treasury £150 in Malt Lottery tickets of £10 each, and was ordered to "sell these as best he can".⁹³ In May one Mr. Berry presented a bill for maps, and the secretary was ordered to give him a malt ticket and the rest in money; but the secretary being entirely out of the latter, was sent out into the city to dispose of more tickets.⁹⁴ Indeed the malt tickets continued to be

⁹⁰ The Journal contains no statement of the amount of salary received by the Lords of Trade. From the Treasury Papers we know that in 1730 it was £1000 each, and it is not at all likely that this would decrease. Moreover, Edmund Burke declared in 1780 that the salary was £1000. On the other hand, Edward Gibbon wrote, "I was appointed one of the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations and my private income was enlarged by a clear addition of between £700 and £800 a year". *Memoirs of Edward Gibbon* (ed. Henry Morley), p. 276. See *Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1729-1730*, p. 407, and *Works of Edmund Burke*, II. 109.

⁹¹ B. T. J., X. 386.

⁹² *Ibid.*, XI. 17.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, X. 424.

the chief source of supply throughout the year. Even when they were gone, the Board received a somewhat precarious support at the hands of the Treasury,⁹⁵ the salaries being frequently in arrears.⁹⁶

It gradually became the custom to send to the Treasury every quarter—at Lady Day, Midsummer, Michaelmas, and Christmas—an itemized account which, besides the clerks' salaries, included the secretary's account for incidentals, the stationer's bill, and a bill for postage. To this was added once a year a bill for "wood and coals" or "wood, coals and candles".⁹⁷ The bills were prepared and presented by the secretary and were frequently gone over, article by article, and signed by the Board before being sent to the Treasury. The amounts varied greatly from year to year. In 1708 this quarterly bill, apart from salaries, was £506 1d., of which £266 11s. 2d. were for postage. In the reign of George I., the bills were ranging between £400 and £900 and by 1730 had reached £1200. For some years accounts were not kept in detail. By 1763 the cost of maintaining the office had grown to £2098 4s., and this too, in spite of the fact that since 1746 all correspondence of the Board had been sent free of postage.

For years postage was a real burden. As early as October, 1696, William Blathwayt, in delivering a package of letters from the plantations, said that if free postage was not allowed as for the late Committee of Trade and Plantations the charge would soon amount to £500 per annum.⁹⁸ This estimate was somewhat exaggerated and produced no result. The Board asked for free postage in 1697,⁹⁹ but it was not granted, and bills from the Post-Office were frequently received¹⁰⁰ in spite of the fact that the quarterly estimate of expense always included an account with the postmaster. The charges on one box of papers from America, in the summer of 1746,

⁹⁴ B. T. J., XI. 55.

⁹⁵ Though a part of the government, the Board appears in some respects more like a private organization. Thus it paid for its own commission—evidently a fee for passing the commission under the seal. It paid for statutes, copies of bills before the House of Commons, etc. Judging from the Journal, each branch of the government paid every other branch for service done as though all had not been parts of one great whole.

⁹⁶ B. T. J., XXIII. 316; XXXIII. 128; XXXIV. 20; XXXV. 191. In 1769 the Board was in debt. B. T. J., LXXVII. 1.

⁹⁷ Besides the bills presented by the Board, the Treasury paid a good many fees presented individually. The attorney-general and solicitor-general before 1718, and after that the counsel-at-law, were paid for each attendance. So also were clerks of the Council and various servants and messengers. After the appointment of the counsel-at-law the Treasury decided that the attorney's and solicitor's fees should be taken out of the incidental expenses. B. T. J., XXX. 326. *Treas. Papers*, 1728-1730, p. 114.

⁹⁸ B. T. J., IX. 192.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, X. 127.

¹⁰⁰ *E. g.*, *ibid.*, XIII. 244; XXXIX. 28, 240.

was "upwards of £30".¹⁰¹ To this the Lords of Trade objected, and it was probably as a result of their complaint that the king¹⁰² in November issued a warrant to the Postmaster General¹⁰³ freeing from postage all letters of the Board of Trade. In 1764 an act of Parliament was passed to "prevent frauds and abuses in the sending and receiving of letters and packets free of postage".¹⁰⁴ By this act the officers and departments that were exempted from postage, including the Board of Trade and Plantations, were required to authorize two persons each in their respective offices to endorse letters. The Board of Trade appointed for this duty Richard Rogers the deputy secretary and Silas Bradbury the clerk of reports, and decided on a form of endorsement as follows:¹⁰⁵

Office of Trade and Plantations.	On His Majesty's Service R ^d Rogers to Mr. Thos. Styles at Portsmouth.

All letters and packages authorized by the Board were supposed to be superscribed according to this model.¹⁰⁶

The importance of postage as an item of expense is not so surprising when one considers the large amount of written matter which found its way to the Board by post, and this is only part of the immense mass of manuscript material preserved in the office. When Burke made his celebrated attack on the Board he ridiculed its 2300 volumes of reports¹⁰⁷ and very likely this was not exaggerated. The Journal alone from 1675 to 1782 comprises ninety large volumes.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps a brief description of the Board's system of book-keeping will throw some light on its methods. The transactions of each meeting were reported, supposedly in full, in the Journal, the account containing the date and place of meeting, the names of those

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, LIV. 71.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁰³ In October, 1755, the Postmaster General wrote to the Board that he had provided vessels for regular monthly correspondence with the colonies. B. T. J., LXIII. 303.

¹⁰⁴ 4 Geo. III., c. 24.

¹⁰⁵ B. T. J., LXXII. 182.

¹⁰⁶ There was at a later date some controversy as to whether or not the Lords of Trade were individually entitled to exemption under this act. B. T. J., LXXXVIII. 179.

¹⁰⁷ *Parl. Hist.*, XXI. 235.

¹⁰⁸ I have seen only the manuscript copies in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. I understand that they are an exact reproduction of the original, not only in subject-matter but in paging, division of volumes, etc.

present, and usually a detailed report of all that took place. The last is, for the most part, naïve and straightforward and makes the reader feel that he has almost been present and watched the Board at its work. A vast army of men and women throughout these eighty-six years appeared at the Plantation Office and either made complaints or furnished information on some phase of the colonies or trade. Such complaints and information, when given orally as they frequently were, were reported in the Journal, often in the minutest detail, and plentifully sprinkled with quotations from the speaker's own words. In this way, not only the general heads of colonial business, but also in great measure the personality of the visitors, is preserved for the student. There were times when many details were omitted, owing no doubt to neglect. Especially at times between 1730 and 1740 it was not uncommon to make a more perfunctory and less picturesque account of the day's proceedings, but in the main, description is full. To the secretary, with the help of the clerks, was entrusted the compilation of reports and it was necessary to impose some check on them. To this end it was decided on December 20, 1714, that henceforth the minutes of each meeting should be read at the next meeting, and before being entered in the Journal should be signed by the commissioner highest in rank who should be present at the reading and had also been present when the business was transacted.¹⁰⁹ This rule was re-enacted from time to time,¹¹⁰ and was for the most part adhered to, to the end of the Board's career.

But the Journal was, as we have seen, only a small part of the Board of Trade papers. To this must be added innumerable documents in the form of petitions, complaints, depositions, letters, narratives, etc., which in one way or another were introduced into the office, besides the bulky colonial correspondence which¹¹¹ was kept up more or less regularly throughout the entire history of the Board. All this material from whatever source was filed away in sections arranged according to subject. There was a bundle—or collection of bundles—for each colony; one marked "Proprieties" dealing with matters peculiar to proprietary governments; one called "Plantations General" having to do with matters of general colonial concern; a bundle on Trade, doubtless with subdivisions; and a miscellaneous one which included, among other things, all papers referring to the internal affairs of the Board itself. When one considers

¹⁰⁹ B. T. J., XXIV. 341.

¹¹⁰ E. g., *ibid.*, XXXVII. 183; LVI. 100.

¹¹¹ This was at times in duplicate, the originals being sent to the Secretary of State.

that the series "Plantations General"¹¹² alone occupies thirty-one large folio volumes, and "Proprieties"¹¹³ twenty-four of the same sort, it is possible to imagine the extent of the whole collection. The Board's method of book-keeping, at its best, involved marginal notes. In the margin, opposite each reference to papers, was an abbreviated word, indicating the department in which such papers had been filed. Besides this there was, during part of the period, an exact citation to the series, bundle, and number of paper within the bundle. As time went on the clerks became more careless about this and at times it was omitted altogether. Some papers referred to more than one colony and of these duplicates might be made by the clerks, and a copy filed in each of several bundles. This is not the only case of duplication. In December, 1699, a fire in the Cockpit caused some fear that the disaster of the previous year might be repeated. Fearing the destruction of the records the Board thought seriously of having them all transcribed in order to keep duplicates in a separate place, and ordered a "competent number of sacks" for carrying them away.¹¹³ The only evidence of such duplication is found in certain entry books in a series called Trade Papers.¹¹⁴ Perhaps want of funds defeated the project. In a few isolated cases the Journal, for no apparent reason, contains two copies of the same minutes.¹¹⁵

The Board of Trade not only accumulated papers of its own, but started life with a considerable stock-in-trade bequeathed from previous councils, commissions, and committees of like purpose. The continuous Journal for some reason begins, not with the forming of the Board in 1696, but with the appointment of the committee of Privy Council which took the place of the disestablished Council of Trade and Plantations in 1675. Before that time the records were somewhat fragmentary. In July, 1696, the books and papers of the Plantation Office which were in the hands of Povey, a clerk of the Privy Council, were, by an order of Council, turned over to William Popple, the secretary of the new Board.¹¹⁶ Blathwayt presented further papers in 1703.¹¹⁷ In 1707 an effort was made to

¹¹² According to the Pennsylvania transcript.

¹¹³ B. T. J., XII. 302.

¹¹⁴ On authority of Dr. C. M. Andrews.

¹¹⁵ Thus at the beginning of volume XXIX. there are a few pages that duplicate others at the end of volume XXVIII., and cover the minutes of July 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, and August 4, 5, 1719. December 18, 1735, and February 4 to April 18, 1777, are duplicated, and December 30, 1777, duplicated and enlarged.

¹¹⁶ B. T. J., IX. 33.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XVI. 137. Blathwayt also had been a clerk of the Privy Council but was now a member of the Board of Trade, having been named in the first commission in 1696.

purchase colonial papers that had been preserved in private hands, but this seems to have failed.¹¹⁸

Besides official documents, a large amount of printed and illustrative material was acquired by purchase and otherwise. A few illustrations will suffice. In March, 1697, "on suggestion that some of the public printed newspapers sometimes contain matters of fact that may be useful to be known for the service of this commission", it was ordered that one of each be taken.¹¹⁹ In July, 1738, a copy of Rymer's *Foedera* was bought for the office.¹²⁰ In 1734 Henry Popple, the secretary's brother, having published a set of maps of the British Empire, a subscription was made for the Board, and one also for each governor in America.¹²¹ Many maps both published and unpublished were received by gift and purchase. Indeed the collection of books and maps which graced the shelves of the Lords of Trade must have been a considerable one and one also which would be of great interest to-day. These books were not only used by the Board itself but were to a certain extent given circulation. It was common for books and maps to be lent to outsiders, a receipt being taken by the secretary¹²² and a description of the missing article sometimes tacked up in the office.¹²³

It does not appear that the Board followed any set rule of procedure, but in the general character of its routine and methods of business there is sufficient uniformity to admit of a fairly accurate description. After a new commission had been received internal affairs of the Board were always considered first. The commission was formally read and the new members, if in town, "took their places at the Board". If not in town at that time a new member

¹¹⁸ In May, 1698, the Board, hearing that Mr. Henry Crisp had books of entry and papers of the Council of Trade of 1662-1663, ordered the secretary to ask him to bring them to the Board. On May 10 he answered that he had never seen any papers of the Council of Trade of 1662, but had heard that some such papers, in the hands of his father-in-law, Mr. Duke, who was secretary of that Council, were burnt in the Temple. He promised to find out about this and also to bring papers of the Royal Fishery of that time of which Duke was secretary. B. T. J., XI. 48, 53. He seems not to have come back, but in June, 1707, the Board received a letter from one Crisp, whom I take to be the same man, offering to sell books and minutes of the Council of Trade, 1660-1668. The Board refused to buy the books without seeing them and there was no result. *Ibid.*, XIX. 284, 296.

¹¹⁹ B. T. J., X. 20.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, XLVIII. 73.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, XLIII. 161; XLIV. 174. *Cal. of Treas. Books and Papers*, 1731-1734, pp. 419, 576.

¹²² *E. g.*, *ibid.*, XXIII. 257.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, LXXXVIII. 29. The Board not only lent but also borrowed. In September, 1697, it was determined to ask Mr. William Bird of Lincoln's Inn for the use of his complete set of Virginia laws. *Ibid.*, X. 261.

would be formally admitted later and his admission noted in the minutes. After the reading of the minutes, rules were frequently adopted similar to those already considered in connection with the clerks, new clerks were appointed if necessary, and in fact anything might be presented and discussed which had to do with the office itself.¹²⁴ Whatever time was left at this session was devoted to the question of colonies or trade that happened to be most pressing. On ordinary days such matters were taken up at the outset. If a petition had been received from merchants or colonists, it was presented by the secretary and considered by the Board. In most cases the Commissioners would not feel prepared to decide on such a petition without further information. They would, therefore, set a day for the discussion and order the secretary to summon persons to be present at the hearing. The subject might be suggested orally instead of by written petition. A large number of matters that came up for discussion were introduced in this way: "the Secretary acquainted the Board" that a certain man was without and wished to be heard. He was called in to state his case, and his information, be it trivial or important, was recorded in the minutes. He was then instructed to "put what he had to offer in writing". Perhaps a day was set for the further consideration of his demands, at which time he not only brought in a written statement, but most likely brought with him several other men to corroborate his assertions. A "hearing", whether the result of a written petition or an oral request, was often a lengthy affair, and involved the testimony of various persons.

If a letter was received from a colonial governor,¹²⁵ together with the voluminous enclosures which always accompanied such letters, this too was presented by the secretary and read. The enclosed papers also might be read through, which in some cases must have been a heroic proceeding. In any case they were disposed of in the proper bundles, and usually a list of titles or descriptions preserved in the minutes. If the papers included copies of laws—and nearly every packet did include some—these were dispatched to the attorney-general or solicitor-general or, after 1718, to the Board's special

¹²⁴ Even the most trivial matters were brought to the attention of the Board. Thus at one time the "necessary woman" presented a bill of £10 for "mops and brooms" which the Board considered too high. B. T. J., XI. 393.

¹²⁵ Such letters, as well as petitions and other papers, might as a rule either be sent directly to the Board by post, or be sent first to the Privy Council or Secretary of State, and transmitted to the Board for consideration. The procedure within the Board itself, *i. e.*, the presentation by the secretary, etc., was the same in either case.

counsellor, to be reported upon from a legal point of view.¹²⁶ In the later years when laws came in great numbers the counsel-at-law frequently attended the Board, and a whole session—or more than one—was given to a single set of acts, each being carefully read and passed upon.¹²⁷ In either case, when the legal report was made, which was sometimes done promptly and at other times after a very long delay,¹²⁸ the Board prepared a representation to the King in Council incorporating the legal advice, and sent it with the laws themselves for the final action of the king. After consideration in the Council, which usually¹²⁹ resulted in confirming the Board's judgment, the laws were returned to the Board with an Order in Council approving or disallowing them as the case might be. This decision was reported to the colonial assembly by the Board of Trade.

When a new governor was appointed for a colony directly under the crown, his commission and instructions were prepared by the Board and approved by the king. In the case of a proprietary governor, the commission was issued by the proprietor, but the instructions were prepared by the Board and imposed through the proprietor on his appointee.

Whatever the business in hand every document¹³⁰ went through three stages. First, the subject was considered and the substance

¹²⁶ Legal advisers were not the only ones consulted. Questions were frequently submitted to the Lords of the Treasury, Lords of the Admiralty, Navy Board, Board of Ordnance, Commissioners of Customs, and other parts of the government on matters pertaining to these respective offices. Messages were constantly being sent back and forth. Indeed the administration was a perfect network of separate but related authorities.

¹²⁷ For an illustration of this see B. T. J., XLV. 94. Comments were written after each law—"no objection", "to lie over", etc.

¹²⁸ Thus on June 22, 1699, the secretary reported that the clerk of the solicitor-general had brought to the Board certain acts of Massachusetts, passed before the establishment of this office, with no report on them. They were ordered sent back to the solicitor for his opinion. B. T. J., XI. 102. The Board also was sometimes responsible for delays. On November 29, 1728, they discussed a New Jersey act for a partition line, etc., and "considering that it had lain by above nine years in this office and no objection had been offered" they ordered a representation for confirming the act. B. T. J., XXXVIII. 265.

¹²⁹ Of course the Board's decisions might be reversed or modified, or a law or report might be returned for reconsideration. I believe, however, that if the total number of laws considered could be brought together, it would be found that in a large majority of cases the Board's decision was affirmed.

¹³⁰ At first there seems to be a distinction between a report and a representation. The latter was the more formal paper addressed to the King in Council, while a report was less formal and was addressed to the Committee of Council. As time went on and the committee came to act in place of the Council, the two words were used more or less interchangeably. Thus on June 29, 1731, the Board signed what in the text is called a representation, but in the margin, a report. B. T. J., XLI. 169. Communications to the Secretary of State were usually called letters.

of the letter or report agreed upon—a process which was sometimes adjourned from day to day and occupied the greater part of several sessions. At last the Board ordered the letter, outlining to the secretary the points which it was to involve. The actual composition fell to the secretary who presented a first draught to the Commissioners for inspection. If satisfactory it was “approved and ordered to be transcribed”. It was then delivered to a clerk to be put into final form, and having been “transcribed fair” was presented to the Board again for signature. Two classes of papers constituted exceptions to this rule: many of the less important letters having been ordered and approved by the Board, were signed by the secretary¹³¹ and sent off without waiting for another meeting; and commissions and instructions for colonial officers, having been transcribed, were sent to the king for his signature.¹³² In many cases a number of days might elapse between the stages of this process, while if there was need of haste they might all be performed in one day.¹³³

Many questions of dispute were argued pro and con, before the Board; and on such occasions both parties attended with “Counsel learned in the law”. The hearing which ensued sometimes lasted for days and had the semblance of a trial, with testimony and legal battles over technicalities which would do credit to a modern court.¹³⁴ In cases of appeal the Board itself had no jurisdiction. When once a decision had been rendered in the colonies, there was no appeal except to the king. The Board however could give such a case a preliminary hearing when asked to do so by a reference from the King in Council.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Or the deputy secretary might sign letters in rare cases. See a letter from Samuel Gellibrand, deputy secretary, to John Hamilton, August 23, 1743. *N. J. Archives*, VI. 153.

¹³² The Board might prepare other papers for the king's signature. Thus in March, 1700, the Board was ordered by the Council to prepare the draught of an Order of Council, whereby the king could approve an agreement between New York and Connecticut over the boundary. *B. T. J.*, XII. 470.

¹³³ This preparing of reports was not the only duty that occupied the clerks in their outer room. Many papers from the colonies were copied and duplicates sent to the Secretary of State, Lords of the Treasury, Commissioners of Customs, and others. Then, too, when a petition was being heard before the Privy Council, the petitioner would frequently ask the Board for copies of papers in its possession bearing on his case, and the request was often granted. It was in such cases as this that the clerks were entitled to fees for extra work.

¹³⁴ On February 9, 1720, the solicitor-general gave an opinion that the Board had power to administer the oath to witnesses. *B. T. J.*, XXX. 80-83. It might be noted also, that the Board seems to have had a seal. On June 9, 1720, this was considered. His Majesty's engraver had presented a plan, and this had been sent to Sunderland, then first Lord of the Treasury, who “thought it very proper”, and then to the king who ordered it engraved. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹³⁵ *B. T. J.*, XXXII. 167.

The Board's methods might involve a division of labor. Thus in 1697, considering that it was impossible for all the "voluminous papers sent from the Plantations" to be read at the meetings, it was decided to divide up the field. Philip Meadows was to give special attention to Virginia and Maryland; William Blathwayt, and in his absence, John Locke, was to look after Jamaica, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands; to Abraham Hill fell New England, New York, and Newfoundland; while John Pollexfen was expected to care for the Proprieties, the charter colonies, and trade in general.¹³⁶ All papers relating to these subjects were to be read by the persons to whom they were assigned and the important parts extracted for consideration by the Board. This was simply a refinement of the process of extraction, since that was one duty that the Board performed for the Privy Council. The plan, however, was short-lived. Another method sometimes resorted to was that of having each member draw up an independent report on some subject, and compiling a representation from a comparison of these separate plans. This was done in 1697 in connection with the English and Irish trade, and John Locke's scheme being "pitched upon" was considered in detail.¹³⁷

Though the work of the Board was, as a rule, performed by the seven or eight members appointed by name, these never forgot that an equal number of high state officers belonged in theory to their institution. When a new Secretary of State was appointed, or a Chancellor of the Exchequer, or any other officer included in the Board's list, a letter was at once dispatched to inform him that he was "a member of this Commission".¹³⁸ When a matter of special importance was to be dealt with the ex-officio members were summoned by letter.¹³⁹ They seldom stayed to the end of the meeting. If Secretary Vernon, for instance, and several others came down to the Board, as soon as the important subject was disposed of they withdrew, whereupon the Board ordered a letter to Secretary Vernon, informing him, as Secretary of State, of what had been done at the Board of Trade. These meetings of "extraordinary Board" were usually held at night. Moreover the Commissioners of Trade might be summoned to a joint meeting with the Privy Council or

¹³⁶ The Earls of Bridgewater and Tankerville seem to have escaped this by their titles. John Methuen, the eighth member, was in Portugal and did not return while his name was included in the Commission of Trade. He never took his place at the Board. B. T. J., IX, 348. *Hist. MSS. Comm., Portland*, III, 576.

¹³⁷ B. T. J., X, 207, 214.

¹³⁸ *E. g., ibid.*, XIII, 288.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, X, 424; XXIV, 16.

with a committee of Council.¹⁴⁰ At the close of such a conference, they adjourned to their own room and continued the session alone, perhaps to put into effect the decisions of the joint meeting, but always to take some account of them in their minutes. On the other hand the conference might take place at the Plantation Office. At one time a meeting of "Cabinet Council"¹⁴¹ was held at the Board, and again word was received that the Committee of Council had "appointed a meeting at this Board tomorrow".¹⁴²

Under peculiar conditions the Board might devote its sessions to a special purpose. Thus after the treaty of Utrecht many days were given up wholly or in part to the examining of debentures and delivering them to claimants of land in Nevis and St. Christopher. As many as fifty debentures were sometimes delivered in one day, and this must have brought a constant stream of ill-assorted visitors. In 1749-1750, when the settlement of Halifax was being arranged for, the Board of Trade appeared at times more like a business office than a department of government.¹⁴³ Chauncey Townshend, a merchant who took the contract to furnish provisions, was in almost constant attendance. To the Board came men who wanted to furnish clothing, medicines, ploughs, and other commodities for the settlers. It was the Board that appointed physicians and surgeons, ministers and schoolmasters, the man authorized to erect saw-mills, and so on, through the almost endless detail. Here arrangements were made for transportation and the proper ventilation of ships. Here, too, came every settler that wished to sail, giving an account of his circumstances and the size of his family, and receiving from the clerk of reports a certificate admitting him on ship-board. It must have been a motley crowd indeed, which in those days thronged the Cockpit, in answer to the Board's advertisement of advantages published in the *London Gazette*.

Through its supervision over trade the Board came into close touch with the seafaring man from everywhere: the merchant from India, Africa, Muscovy or the Levant, the Newfoundland fisherman, the West Indian slave-trader, the dealer in Canary wines or Irish linen or American staves, all came to the Board to tell their stories. Not only did the Lords of Trade solicit information from the merchants, but the merchants solicited attention from them. If a man

¹⁴⁰ *E. g.*, *ibid.*, XIV. 446; XV. 104; XVII. 8; XXXIX. 263; XLI. 287; LIX. 74, etc. On July 1, 1702, the Board received a letter from Mr. War, with the queen's will that the Board attend her at committee at St. James, to-morrow at 11. *Ibid.*, XV. 115.

¹⁴¹ B. T. J., XI. 68.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, XXII. 417.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, LVII., LVIII., *passim*.

wanted a patent for an invention, or protection for an industry, he had to produce some proof that he was able to make use of it. To the Board of Trade came not only his testimonials—and they came in great numbers—but also his demonstrations. For example, in August, 1696, during a discussion of the linen trade, Mr. Furmin displayed the model of a spinning-wheel of his own invention which could be manipulated “by a girl of ten”.¹⁴⁴ Various were the bundles of merchandise that found their way into the Colonial Office. A box of clothing, sent to New York for the soldiers during Lord Cornbury’s administration, and returned as unfit for use, was brought to the Board and publicly opened.¹⁴⁵ Samples of wool were now and then received, and specimens of copper. Thomas Lowndes was fond of sending certificates of the goodness of his salt,¹⁴⁶ accompanied by boxes of it by way of illustration.¹⁴⁷ John Plowman, who asked for a patent for curing sturgeon in 1720, produced a box of fish at the Board to show the merit of his method.¹⁴⁸

Not only were boxes of merchandise sent to the Board, but the living curiosities that came to town were looked upon as belonging to its province. Thus in 1697 when five Mohawk Indians were brought to Plymouth among French prisoners, the Board was closely concerned in their care. Two of them made a visit to London for the purpose of sight-seeing and these were presented to the Board of Trade.¹⁴⁹ In 1730 an African trader, Bulfinch Lamb, and his black interpreter, Captain Tom, attended the Board and presented a letter from the Emperor of Dahomey.¹⁵⁰

Perhaps the most picturesque scene that ever took place in the council chamber of the Board of Trade was the consummation of a

¹⁴⁴ B. T. J., IX, 51.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, XVI, 131.

¹⁴⁶ *E. g.*, *ibid.*, LIII, 118.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, LI, pt. 2, p. 46. Thomas Lowndes is a curious illustration of the sort of peculiar personality with which the Board had at times to deal. He was constantly appearing with a proposal, a request, or a complaint. In 1734 he objected to a land-grant in South Carolina, claiming that he had a conflicting grant. He emphasized this claim by making personal charges against Popple in a stilted paper called “Thomas Lowndes’ protest against the Lords Com^{rs} declared Prepossession in favor of their Secretary”. It is amusing to note the seriousness with which the Board considered this paper and resolved “to have no further correspondence with the said Lowndes”. A few months later he wrote again at length, asserting that Popple had helped to cheat him out of £60. He said that if he did not abhor “disserving his country” he could show a “neighboring nation how to deprive Great Britain of a valuable branch of trade without infringing any treaty”. This epistle was honored with a set of five resolutions by the Board. *Ibid.*, XLIV., *passim*.

¹⁴⁸ B. T. Plant. Gen., L, 5.

¹⁴⁹ B. T. J., X, 66.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XLI, 117. *Cal. of Treas. Books and Papers*, 1731–1734, p. 88.

treaty with seven chiefs of the Cherokee Nation in September, 1730.¹⁵¹ On the seventh, the chiefs and their interpreter attended, together with Colonel Johnson, the agent for Indian affairs, and Sir William Keith, governor of South Carolina. The members of the Board present that day were Thomas Pelham, Martin Bladen, and James Brudenell. They had taken care to have Sir William Keith prepare beforehand the form of a treaty with its imagery and phraseology modelled after Indian ideals. They had also asked for and obtained from the War Office the attendance of two sergeants and twelve grenadiers. When all were assembled one member of the Board, by means of an interpreter, read to the Indians the treaty, which was in part as follows:

Now the great King of Great Britain bearing love in his heart to the powerful and great nation of the Cherokee Indians, his good friends and allies, His Majesty has empowered us to treat with you here, as if the whole nation of the Cherokees, their old men, young men, wives and children, were all present. And you are to understand the words we speak as the words of the great king, our master, whom you have seen, and we shall understand the words you speak to us as the words of all your people with open and true hearts to the great king. . . . He takes it kindly that the great nation of the Cherokees sent you hither a great way to brighten the chain of friendship between him and them and between your people and his people; that the chain of friendship between him and the Cherokee Indians is like the sun which shines here and also upon the great mountains where they live and equally warms the heart of the Indians and of the English. That as there are no spots or Blackness on the sun so is there not any Rust or Foulness in this chain and as the great King has fastened one end of it to his own breast he desires you will carry the other end of the chain and fasten it well to the breasts of your nation. . . . And here upon we give four pieces of white cloth to be dyed blue.

The next article regulated trade between the Indians and the people of Carolina. The following articles stipulated, among other things, that the Indians were to keep peace with the English and make war on their enemies, that they were to refuse to trade with any other nation and were to return fugitive slaves. At the end of each article presents were given, including large quantities of ammunition and "six dozen hatchets, twelve dozen spring-knives, four dozen brass kettles and ten dozen belts". Samples of all these articles were stowed away somewhere in the office and were shown to the Indians at the close of the interview. They expressed their approval and promised to give an answer in two days.

The second conference, on the ninth, must have been as imposing as the first. The soldiers attended as before. The Commissioners of Trade, who, this time were Bladen, Brudenell, and Paul Dociniqué, found themselves addressed as follows:

¹⁵¹ B. T. J., XL. 226-237.

We are come hither from a dark, mountainous place, where nothing but darkness is to be found, but are now in a place where there is light. . . . We look upon you as if the great King George was present, and we love you as representing the great King, and shall die in the same way of thinking. . . . We look upon the great King George as the Sun and as our Father and upon ourselves as his Children, for though we are red and you white, yet our hands and hearts are joined together. Having finished this speech the spokesman of the Cherokees walked to the table, and, laying down upon it a bunch of feathers as a symbol of his good-will said:

This is our way of talking, which is the same to us as your letters in the Book are to you; and to you, Beloved Men, we deliver these feathers in token of all we have said and of our agreement to your article.

This incident not only adds a touch of color to the picture, but also illustrates fairly well one phase of the Board's position. A treaty of peace with the Cherokee Nation might vitally affect the happiness and welfare of the colony of Carolina, and was therefore by no means beneath the dignity of the government. But the Privy Council could hardly be expected to exchange scalping-knives for feathers or pronounce a speech like the one above, in Indian terms. Such a duty must be delegated to a subordinate authority, and that authority was the Board of Trade. Indeed the treaty-making power of the Board is here displayed at a low ebb, for it had a part in negotiations of much greater importance. The point to be noted here is that the Board of Trade stood between the King in Council on the one hand, and the outlying portions of the empire on the other. As a result of this position it could, and did many times, give advice and submit policies, but at all times it furnished information. That such information was needed there can be no doubt. In those days reliable knowledge of remote corners of the earth was not easily accessible as it is to-day. Travel was slow. Modern methods of communication were not invented and printed material was expensive and scarce. There was considerable ignorance, even in government circles, about the British possessions. For example, the Commissioners of Customs asked the Board at one time if Campeche was an English plantation¹⁵² and at another time if Annamabore was a "colony, territory or place belonging to His Majesty".¹⁵³ Such questions the Board was expected to answer.

By close connection with colonists and merchants the Board kept its finger, so to speak, on the colonial and commercial pulse, and helped to diagnose disorders for treatment by a higher power. That

¹⁵² B. T. J., XXXVIII. 37.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, LXXXIII. 47.

the touch was always acute or the diagnosis always correct, no one can claim. That the contact was of much value can hardly be denied. Dropping the figure, the Board of Trade and Plantations was the one place at which all elements of the ever-growing British Empire could come together on common ground. Here came the British merchant from any corner of the globe to describe his trade or display his wares. Here came the wealthy proprietor to defend his boundaries or the lowliest colonist to settle his dispute; the Indian chief to make peace, or the foreign settler to arrange for his emigration. To this same place all papers regarding the colonies were likely in the end to find their way—books, maps, descriptions, primitive newspapers, pamphlets, anonymous letters, anything that could add a touch to the Englishman's knowledge of the New World across the sea. Here too could come or send, the Commissioners of Customs or of the Treasury, the Navy Board, or Lords of the Admiralty, to gather such information as the Board had been able to collect. Surely nothing could be more useful in theory than just such an information bureau as the Board of Trade. But it is difficult to look constantly at such masses of minute detail and still see things in the large. The Board had the power of a subcommittee coupled with the outward form of a Council of State; perhaps it is not surprising that while the colonies were growing into prominence and colonial questions were becoming acute, it was losing its grasp and was settling down into a more and more formal and expensive institution.

MARY PATTERSON CLARKE.